VERSIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

THERE is an interesting coincidence—it may not be a strange one—in the two extremes of the idea of "responsibility" that have developed in recent years. One extreme is represented by the conception of unqualified personal responsibility which was made a part of the Charter of the Nuremberg Trial—essentially a *legal* definition; the other extreme is found in the mood—rather than any precise formulation—of modern psychiatry with respect to the relationship between criminals and society, tending toward the view that social conditions are primarily responsible for crime, while individual offenders are unhappy victims of the bad environment imposed upon them by the rest of the population.

In striking contrast to the judgment of "scientific" psychology, the Nuremberg standard of moral behavior, provided in Article 8 of the Charter of the Tribunal, is literally a counsel of perfection. The four participating victorious powers which defined the scope and procedure of the trials declared: "The fact that the defendant acted pursuant to an order of his government or superior shall not free him from responsibility." In other words, the German charged with being a "war criminal" for some specific act could not offer what was previously acceptable under military law—"the defense of superior orders." Instead, he was expected to have consulted his conscience in preference to the orders of the highest political and military authority of his country. The suasions of patriotism no longer have standing, under the Nuremberg rule. Only the rule of "abstract right" has validity, although it may be necessary to wait until a great war has been fought, so that the victors may define the application of that "abstract right" to particular circumstances, before anyone can be sure that his moral sense is operating correctly.

It should be obvious that the Nuremberg rule is ridiculously impractical except in an anarchist society, or in a completely totalitarian society. In the anarchist society, each individual would decide for himself what is "moral," and therefore could hardly blame anyone else for ordering or "influencing" him to do wrong. The totalitarian society, on the other hand, would interpret morality as strict obedience to a multitude of rules for public and private behavior, with the result that each individual could be held accountable to the State for his deviations from the prescribed "social" morality.

The psychiatric idea of responsibility is well illustrated in an article by Frederic Wertham, "The Prevention of Murder," in the *Scientific American* for June. Dr. Wertharn, a psychiatrist in the Department of Hospitals of New York City, tells the story of Robert Irwin, a psychopathic killer who, as the doctor explains, before his crime "presented himself *10 times* within four and a half years to the proper medical agencies to ask for help." The psychiatric analysis of Irwin, in terms of the five stages of what Dr. Wertham calls a *catathymic crisis,* is not of interest, here, except for the final comment that is offered. After killing three people, Irwin was examined by a lunacy commission, and on Wertham's testimony he was permitted to plead guilty to second-degree murder. He was sentenced to a total of 139 years in prison, but after examination at Sing Sing he was immediately transferred to the state hospital for the criminally insane. Irwin, Dr. Wertham reports, has shown no mental deterioration since he was institutionalized, more than ten years ago; on the contrary, his letters to the doctor are warm and friendly, the last one received telling about the care he was giving to a sparrow that had lost a foot through frostbite. Dr. Wertham comments:

Ever since I got that letter I have been unable to dismiss the question from my mind: Did society ever show as much concern for sick Robert Irwin as he showed for a sick sparrow?

We have not recited the case of Robert Irwin in order to accuse Dr. Wertham of sentimentalizing over a brutal killer who found "adjustment" in the murder of three innocent persons. We have no quarrel, either, with the psychiatric version of the facts, so far as they are stated, nor with Dr. Wertham's interpretation of them. Rather, the point of our discussion is this: What, actually, does it mean to say that *society* is responsible for Irwin's "criminal" behavior?

For, here, in this indictment of society, is the polar opposite of the Nuremberg Charter's definition of responsibility. A war criminal can plead no superior order, no external influence, to excuse his actions. The German architect at Dachau who in 1947 was sentenced to twenty years in prison for using concentration camp labor on a building project during the war was not permitted to claim that "pressure" was exerted upon him to employ this labor force. He could not say that the Gestapo "suggested" it to him, or that the Party required him to make use of the inmates of the Dachau camp. He *knew* what was wrong, the Nuremberg Charter declared, and he would have to suffer for his wrongdoing.

But Irwin, who strangled two women and drove an ice pick into the brain of a sleeping man, we are to understand, was "sick." Not Irwin, the man, but Society, the abstraction, is responsible. Yet you cannot "punish" Society. You can appeal to it in articles and books, as Dr. Wertham has done; you can sneer and jeer at it, as various alienated radicals have done and are doing; or you can destroy it more or less completely with atom bombs, as the United States has done in the instance of one society. But none of these measures is calculated to reduce very much the sort of aberrations which overtook Robert Irwin, and through him, his three victims.

It seems evident that the psychiatric account of responsibility ends with this indictment of Society, leaving a futilely circular problem to solve for people who would like to do more than write articles demanding that Society turn over a new leaf. For if people are not responsible for what they do, but only Society, which makes people what they are, and if Society is nothing more than a lot of people whose lives are joined in social relationships, then *nobody* is responsible. This conclusion is fine for writing articles, but not much good to a judge on the bench, a teacher in a classroom, nor even for a Nuremberg Tribunal, supposing for a moment that there could be sense to a "war criminals" trial.

To say that nobody is really responsible has the practical effect of handing the functions of social justice and the maintenance of order over to barbarism and superstition—to self-righteously indignant men such as presided over the proceedings at Nuremberg. To say that nobody is really responsible is to say that nothing can be done—that we must wait for a miracle like the Second Coming to straighten us out.

The psychiatrists, doubtless, would object to the foregoing strictures. They would insist that blaming society is not the same as saying nothing can be done. They would argue that society is made up of various institutions which, taken together, shape our common life institutions like the "medical agencies" which paid so little effective attention to Robert Irwin's requests for proper treatment. And they would urge that these agencies adopt a more comprehensive view. of their responsibilities. But psychiatrists, much more than others, know how understaffed and underfinanced are, nearly all such public agencies. A book like *The Shame of the States* by Albert Deutch shows that any important criticism of social welfare agencies must at once revert to the same old criticism of "society"—for elected or appointed officials can do very little to improve conditions without the vigorous support of public opinion.

There is a theme in modern literature—it may be called the Grip of Circumstance—which is based on the same general interpretation of human nature and society as the psychiatric diagnosis. The leading characters of books which develop this theme all seem to say, "I am the creature of my environment; pity me! For I was fated by the impersonal forces of my time to turn out the way I did." Such books have not been without value, for they bring home the fact of the interdependent web of all human life—of the inability of any man to act alone. But when a book leaves the reader with the impression that human beings are nothing more than plastic models—offprints, in three or four dimensions—of their times and conditionings, the dignity of man has suffered an extreme mutilation. If man is no more than this, then discussions of "responsibility" have no meaning at all. And a culture which adopts this view of man in its literature is a culture which has admitted ultimate defeat. It is a culture where the chief occupation of the intellectual classes is to lament their impotence, thus giving over the initiative for all positive action to others in whom irrational and subhuman qualities are uppermost. The Nuremberg Trials, with their specious moralism and arrogant hypocrisy, were an inevitable consequence of this "decline of the West," this repudiation of the moral initiative in human life. All that was left to the rationalizers of the trials was the rhetoric of responsibility, with its meaning entirely gone. The impossibility of applying the standards of the Charter except under the conditions of absolute military authority is sufficient evidence of this.

A further irony lies in the fact that the gradual shifting of the idea of responsibility from the center—the individual man—to the periphery—the abstraction of society—has amounted to a practical endorsement of the Marxist theory of human nature, insofar as Marxism has a theory of human nature. From the principle that "morality is social" to the dogma that "morality is political" is a very short step—almost no step at all—among a people who have already conceded that the environment makes the man. For who, if this proposition be admitted, can make the environment, except the political entity, the State, and how is the State to make a "good" environment without first gaining absolute power over the people, or, to use the abstract term, over "society"?

But if environment does not make the man, what does?

This is the question for which no one has an answer, least of all the psychiatrists, unless they say, as some of them doubtless will, that Biology makes the man, and he is then reshaped by the environment. This affirmation, however, will get them into considerable trouble with the anti-fascists, who have a natural dislike for any suggestion that heredity is decisive in human life.

There is another answer, of course, one far from new—which is that God made man as he is. This is the theological answer, which has not been improved upon since the objections of the eighteenth century, to the effect that if God made man, He certainly made him very badly. Nor does the theory that God is responsible help us very much in our present situation. People have been asking God to make them better for a long time, without particularly impressive results.

Related to the theological answer is the explanation of human evil in terms of "sin." The people who choose this explanation are of two sorts: either they regard themselves as spotless souls who are able to provide ample descriptions of the sins of other people, or they take the position that *everyone* is sinful, so what is the use of complaining? This *mea culpa* philosophy, which is always careful to add that *you* are *culpa,* too, is of no practical assistance. It denies the possibility of progress except by the intervention of divine grace and regards all attempts at analysis of the human situation as an impudent invasion of the province of the Deity. There is considerable logic in this view—the logic of the man who says, "God got us into this mess, and only God, therefore, can get us out of it. Let us pray."

Actually, the only sort of responsibility which is accepted, today, is the non-theoretical or non-philosophical and empirical sort which is determined, like the British, to "muddle through." The redefinition of "responsibility" in terms of abstractions like "society" has the effect of reducing the personal *sense* of responsibility of the members of society to a kind of instinctive minimum. The current doctrines of responsibility are almost all social-political in content. And the prevailing theory of evil in human life always involves finding some scapegoat of class, nation or race—some generalized abstraction to bear the burden of our sins when blaming "society" seems to have no pertinence.

Why is there no greatness in modern literature? Because there are no great men in modern literature. There is only the tragedy of "conditionings" and the impotence of the people who are caught in them. Even the vocabulary of human greatness has lost its significance. A great book, a great story, is always about a human being who is wrestling with destiny. He may fail or he may succeed, but he has tried, and his essay has meaning. His courage, his intelligence, his integrity—these are qualities which bespeak a well of divinity hidden behind the human visage, stirring and driving onward the human heart. To be great, men must believe in Man, in themselves, and in some sort of infinity of the self—its coexistence, at least, with the grandeur of the whole natural world, and the limitless potency, in principle, of high resolve.

Thus we are brought to our conclusion, that there can be no real responsibility among men without a full sense of the capacity in men to do and be what they have always expected or hoped from either "society," the gods, or even "God." Responsibility for wrong cannot exist without capacity for right, and the modern world is obsessed by only the first and lesser half of moral reality. Increasingly, we are becoming a people who want somebody to tell our troubles to, and someone to blame. In time, if we continue in this way, we shall arrive back in the Dark Ages with only God to listen and only the Devil to blame. Is this what we want?

Letter from GERMANY

BERLIN.—On May 21 there began a strike of about 14,000 railroad men in the Western sector of Berlin. The underlying causes of the strike were involved in the resistance of the Russian occupation authorities and of the Russian-controlled railroad administration for the whole of Berlin to introduction of Western currency—usually four times higher in value than Eastern currency and exchanged at this rate. The railroad administration refused to accept fares and to pay wages in Western currency to the railroad men who live in the Western sector and have to meet their expenses with this currency.

Initially, the strike brought about the defeat of the Russian side, for despite its force of many thousands of policemen, the railroad administration did not succeed in breaking the strike. The service of the electric railroad of Berlin was mutilated: traffic in the Eastern part of Berlin went on, although impeded, but was discontinued completely in the Western part. This preliminary defeat was somewhat remarkable, regardless of what the final settlement may be and how soon it comes about.

The very first days of the strike were dramatic: actual battles for the Western railroad stations took place; some stations changed hands several times, while hundreds of people were wounded and one civilian was killed. Both sides organized bands of young men to carry on the fight, which involved the sabotage of the railroad installations. Both sides fought also with their broadcasting stations—there are four in Berlin for German listeners, two on each side.

But all this was only the outer frame of more important events which have to be enumerated:

(1) For the first time in many years—under Hitler and after—German people had opportunity in this strike to engage in a bit of personal political activity, with the aim of *determining their own fate;* and they were able to show openly their hate for Eastern totalitarianism. Many repressed impulses came to the surface during the strike. People let go with stones and clubs against heavily armed policemen. Here was a time "to let off steam" after years of suffering silently and enduring the passivity forced upon them. It seems that it does not pay to suppress mass activity by strict regulation of all behavior. The calm surface is deceptive and, in the end, social forces erupt—with great damage to both men and property. The railroad strike, therefore, may be a forecast of things to come.

(2) In the battles for the railroad stations, the "East" had only its organized forces, namely, Russian-controlled organizations and police, whereas the "West" was represented by the mass of spontaneously assembling people. No hand in the Eastern sector moved voluntarily to support the railroad administration, although the Eastern radio repeatedly suggested that people "take things into their own hands." Even the railroad police proved unreliable in some instances. People who were imported by Russian-dominated organizations into the Western sector to act as "passengers" to give the impression of it "normal" traffic—and thus to discourage the strikers—withdrew and went home.

(3) When the strikers, supported by the sympathy and the active help of the common people, during the first three days had won and occupied almost all Western stations, the situation changed. The strike was originally possible for the reason that the superior political forces were preoccupied with other matters, thus allowing, for the first time, an independent decision to Berliners. But, being embedded in the field of international tension, all independent German movements of a social and political character are soon transformed into instruments of the "great strategy" of the big powers, and lose thereby their independence and progressive and encouraging aspect. Surprised by the sudden outburst of spontaneity involved in the strike, and afraid of its

consequences, the Western Allied commanders ordered Western town council police to occupy the stations together with the strikers. As a result, the strike came to a standstill, with each side simply holding its positions; in other words, the strike inevitably became one of those protracted and stagnant situations which we observe in the international field. At this writing, the end is not yet clear. [According to current press reports, strikers in the Western sector returned to work during the week of June 26, with the understanding that they would be paid in Western currency, while many of those who live in the Soviet part of Berlin still remain away from their jobs—through fear of reprisals, it is suggested.—Eds.]

The number of different kinds of police the Berlin traction strike called into action is of interest. There were Soviet, American, British, and French Military Police; Western and Eastern town council police; Eastern railroad police, and Western industrial police. Possibly, there were still other kinds of police, but these eight varieties should be enough to illustrate the artificial "normalcy" which reigns in Berlin.

GERMAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
UTOPIA—IN REVERSE

THE latest Book-of-the-Month choice, *Nineteen-Eighty-Four,* by George Orwell (Harcourt, Brace & Co.), deserves credit as the most thought-provoking of recent popular volumes. (This makes it two in a row for BoM according to the rating of this Department.)

Nineteen-Eighty-Four describes an imaginary World Society of that date, and the narrative is from the perspective of men and women of England—or "Airstrip One," England having become a subsidiary of the American Empire, "Oceania." By 1984, all of the insidious vices of our social thinking have matured. We have learned how to "double-think"—that is, to maintain the tenacity of purpose and industry which are ideally associated with integrity and honesty, while having done away with all genuine moral concepts. Shibboleths of pre-1950 socialism are used, but they are distorted to the point where no one expects them to mean any of the things which hopeful persons still see in them today.

Orwell's carefully drawn leading character, Winston Smith, is the prototype of the "average" man of any time or place. He is caught up in the powerful controls of a State machinery which he does not understand, but is reluctant to accept the perversions of thought which "The Party" enforces upon him. He nourishes inward rebellion and a rather limp hope that the prevailing government will fall from power. Love affairs and love marriages are strictly forbidden by The Party, but Smith manages to meet a girl who is sufficiently rebellious against party decrees to fall in love with him. The two find in the very expression of their love an act of resistance against the State and all it stands for, but in the end they are caught, retained by the Thought Police for "re-education," and crushed by the diabolically thorough conditioning of their party's torture chambers. They end as complete "believers" in "Big Brother," the personalized symbol of the Party's paternal rule, having utterly lost the spark of their feeling for each other and having wholly betrayed each other.

The new society, which obliterates all that is human in these two, is based upon Power—not wealth or hereditary prestige—but naked Power, worshipped for its own sake. Party members have conceived this worship to be the most intelligent and fruitful pursuit. They are not cruel in the same sense we might ascribe to a fanatical Nazi—they really "hate" nothing and no one —but they are consecrated to the goal of creating a party or system so strong that it will wipe out any conventional idea of individuality or immortality, itself becoming the only source of immortality for the Party Members.

Some 75 per cent of the population are still "proles"—short for proletarians—but with these the leading lights of The Party are in no way concerned. They are not afraid of a Proletarian revolt because the know from past history that revolutions of the underprivileged occur only when some one other than the oppressed themselves takes an interest in formulating the basis for an overthrow of the government. Thus all of the energies of the "Thought-Police" are directed at weeding out any heretical or rebellious tendencies among the more intelligent. The strictest surveillance is exercised over Party Members themselves. The proletarians are allowed all of the vices, while the members of The Party are allowed none. The proletarians may do with impunity all manner of things which would bring instant death to anyone belonging to the intellectual class.

With the creation of three big Super-States—Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia, it was finally possible for the ruling class of each to foster a *continuous state of war*—a war which kept the masses occupied with emotions appropriate to the imperial purposes. None of the three great powers could by any possibility "conquer" one of the others, for they did not really wish to, but they

could fight guerrilla actions back and forth endlessly in the no-man's-land margins between the empires.

Mr. Orwell allows Winston Smith to discover a book analyzing the "Oceanic" society from the perspective that we would probably call "objective," today. The author of the book, presumably, is "underground," and the work hard to get hold of, but Mr. Orwell makes good use of Smith's copy, reproducing from it long sections of dispassionate historical analysis—which means that Orwell can say many things he wants to say without resorting to plot maneuverings. "The Book," as it is called, explains the theory behind the continual warfare maintained by the Super-State. The key lies in the fact that "the consciousness of being at war, and therefore in danger, makes the handing-over of all power to a small caste seem the natural, unavoidable condition of survival."

Orwell draws from "The Book" an analysis of the Super-State's use of surplus labor: "In principle it would be quite simple to waste the surplus labor of the world by building temples and pyramids, by digging holes and filling them up again, or even by producing vast quantities of goods and then Setting fire to them. But this would provide only the economic and not the emotional basis for a hierarchical society. . . . the only way of achieving this was by continuous warfare."

The real root of the Super-State is the "double-think"—a consciously developed capacity for believing in incompatibles, so that power may not be threatened by any individual's sense of logic.

> Even the humblest Party member is expected to be competent, industrious, and even intelligent within narrow limits, but it is also necessary that he should be a credulous and ignorant fanatic whose prevailing moods are fear, hatred, adulation, and orgiastic triumph. In other words it is necessary that he should have the mentality appropriate to a state of war. It does not matter whether the war is actually happening, and, since no decisive victory is possible, it does not matter whether the war is going well or badly. All that is needed is that a state of war should exist. The splitting of the intelligence which the Party requires of its members, and which is more easily achieved in an atmosphere of war, is now almost universal, but the higher up the ranks one goes, the more marked it becomes. It is precisely in the Inner Party that war hysteria and hatred of the enemy are strongest. In his capacity as an administrator, it is often necessary for a member of the Inner Party to know that this or that item of war news is untruthful, and he may often be aware that the entire war is spurious and is either not happening or is being waged for purposes quite other than the declared ones; but such knowledge is easily neutralized by the technique of *doublethink.* Meanwhile no Inner Party member wavers for an instant in his mystical belief that the war *is* real, and that it is bound to end victoriously, with Oceania the undisputed master of the entire world.

The following description suggests the way in which the psychology of the Super-State evolved out of our own historical period:

> The heirs of the French, English, and American revolutions had partly believed in their own phrases about the rights of man, freedom of speech, equality before the law, and the like, and had even allowed their conduct to be influenced by them to some extent. But by the fourth decade of the twentieth century all the main currents of political thought were authoritarian. The earthly paradise had been discredited at exactly the moment when it became realizable. Every new political theory, by whatever name it called itself, led back to hierarchy and regimentation. And in the general hardening of outlook that set in round about 1930, practices which had been long abandoned, in some cases for hundreds of years—imprisonment without trial, the use of war prisoners as slaves, public executions, torture to extract confessions, the use of hostages and the deportation of whole populations—not only became common again, but were tolerated and even defended by people who considered themselves enlightened and progressive.

A New York *Times* reviewer, Mark Schorer, suggests the essential contribution of *Nineteen-Eighty-Four:* "We are ourselves swept into the meaning and the means of a society which has as its single aim the total destruction of the individual identity. No real reader can neglect this

experience with impunity. And he will return to his own life from Smith's escape into living death with a resolution to resist power wherever it means to deny him his individuality, and to resist for himself the poisonous lures of power." Mr. Schorer also makes an interesting judgment about Orwell's motivation as an author. He points out that *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* is in no sense a satire, and that the reader who feels that he can keep his distance from the fantastic schemes of the Super-State—as he might be able to do if they were only satirized—will be rudely shocked into the realization that Mr. Orwell is not fooling in the same way that a satirist fools. There is no "comic relief."

Orwell's earlier volume, *Animal Farm,* was a satirical novel concerned with Soviet totalitarianism. In *Nineteen-Eighty-Four,* we find a much broadened and more penetrating view. The Super-State, Orwell is now saying, results from world-wide human inadequacy, and not because a single group or person scores a *coup d'état.* Orwell speaks a sort of universal language; he writes as neither a Socialist, a Capitalist, a Pacifist, nor an Anarchist, but those who consider themselves as belonging to any of these groups will certainly feel that Orwell is talking to them.

As usual, this Department feels it impossible to avoid suggesting that we need to do something about a description of world tragedy besides being horrified by it. We would like to encourage some author, for instance, to write another novel describing the re-creation of a genuine humanity out of the shambles of *Nineteen-Eighty-Four.* But we are not sorry that Mr. Orwell did not himself attempt it in the same volume. There are some brutal realities which need to be faced squarely and stared at soberly for some time. If Mr. Orwell had let us believe that somehow, in fairy tale fashion, the monster State would come to an inevitable end, he would have failed in his purpose. We honestly believe that Mr. Orwell wanted to stimulate thought more than he wanted to write a novel. Consistent with the Tolstoyan

view of art, his fiction does not suffer as a result, but seems, in fact, to be enhanced in quality.

COMMENTARY
PURSUING THE DIAGNOSIS

THIS week's lead article and the Review section discuss almost a common problem. The "world-wide human. inadequacy," for example, in which Mr. Orwell finds the explanation of the rise of the Super-State, seems closely related to the conceptions of responsibility considered in the lead article. It is gratifying that so talented a writer as Mr. Orwell has located the paralysis of human independence at the *psychological* level, and not in external circumstances nor in the results of reactionary political revolutions.

Nineteen-Eighty-Four may mark the beginning of a new sort of criticism, seeking the causes of oppressive institutions in slavish attitudes of mind. And if we can trace to their source the mental images which lead to self-contempt, to feelings of impotence and ingrained timidity, it may be possible, also, to lay the foundations for a movement of regeneration— regeneration rather than "reform"—which will arouse deeper springs of action than any recent or contemporary movement for human betterment has been able to touch.

The psychiatrists have done much to expose the relation between mental disorders and inherited religious ideas of guilt and sin. They have laid bare the consequences of social apathy and the large-scale effects of the aimlessness of modern life. But if we are not miserable sinners, after all—if it is only a cultural overlay that makes us think we are marked with the weakness of Adam and the insidious guile of Eve—what, then, are we, that we may set out to live better, more "responsible" lives? Here, the psychiatrists are noticeably silent, except for occasional banalities on either the scientific or the religious side of modern opinion.

Responsibility, so far as we can see, is a function of moral intelligence, and of what may be called—for lack of a more specific term—the *will* of the individual. The man of will invites responsibility, while the pliable, "conditioned" individual fears and flees from it. These categories of will and moral intelligence in human life have been deliberately ignored for at least a generation or two. Science generally denies them substantial reality, while religion implies that we may possess them only upon the sufferance or "grace" of the Deity. Yet they are qualities which belong peculiarly to man, and without them he falls to a subhuman level of existence, becoming a natural inhabitant of a totalitarian world.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

A CONSIDERATION of India's problems in respect to the development of an adequate educational system should prove of particular interest to all readers of this Department. Since the withdrawal of British financial and military control from India, there has been steadily increasing attention on the part of Western peoples to developments in that country. It is a traditional part of the Western temperament to respond to pioneering activities of any sort, and certainly the four hundred million persons of India are now pioneering, whether all of them know it or not, in a "national education program." India has become practically the newest country in the world, while maintaining the distinction of being at the same time one of the oldest. Whatever constitutional and educational trends are now, inaugurated, there, begin something entirely new, also, in the way of opportunities for Indians, young and old, to contribute to the future, self-chosen, national characteristics of the Indian people.

In England and America, educational trends have been long established. While innovations may yet occur within the context of any system which has existed for a considerable time, it is likely that the most original developments will occur when a fresh environment for educational undertakings marks a radical departure from the past. This is the case in India, the new nation, where the educational system of British India was utterly inadequate in respect to reaching the majority of Indians, and at the same time was a distorted imitation of British Isle traditions, unsuited to the Orient. It is not surprising to find the savants of modern India maintaining that schools or universities organized or sponsored by the British Government were aimed chiefly at obtaining an adequate number of clerks for British employment. Education in India under the British was indeed very much an opportunistic policy of

Government, and in no sense the devoted creation of men and women like Froebel, Pestalozzi, Montessori, Dewey or Hutchins. Moreover, the whole Western concept of education was psychologically as well as geographically foreign to India. It followed a scientific and formally rationalistic bent, whereas the most natural basis for education in India was entirely different. Psychology, philosophy and religion were the subjects which attracted Indians, but certainly not in the categorized fashion familiar to the West.

During those years in which Gandhi became the central focus for the birth of the new India, an entirely different application of Indian philosophy began to suggest itself. Various profundities of religion were gradually integrated with the social and political needs of the common man, and as a result, the implications of philosophy and religion lost their vagueness. It was inevitable that an educational movement should have grown up around the person of Gandhi, it having been encouraged and to some degree planned by this man—who might be called one of the greatest "experts in adult education" who has ever lived.

Between 1937 and Gandhi's death in 1948, a Gandhian view on child education appeared, and was adopted and furthered by many of Gandhi's closest friends. The gift of some land next to a tiny village near Wardha, in the Central Provinces, provided the location for an experimental school. Gandhi selected this site for a school because, he said, the only education he was interested in was that which would work anywhere in India, regardless of conditions. The Central Provinces of India are the poorest provinces in a poor country, with an extraordinarily high proportion of destitution and illiteracy. Gandhi wanted a school that would grow from grass roots under the most difficult conditions and survive the most overwhelming odds. He wanted a school that would be self-supporting even in such an environment, and he knew that the only way to make such an enterprise self-supporting was to have the school directly related to the tremendous

need for village improvement, so that villagers could understand what the school might mean to them. But he wanted to construct more than better villages—he held that performing useful tasks would help men to construct themselves. Before his school began, Gandhi wrote *(Harijan,* July, 1937):

> By education I mean an all-round, drawing out of the best in child and man—body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby men and women can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would, therefore, begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the State takes over the manufactures of these schools. . . .

I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under a system of education. . . .

The first tangible step toward the establishment of what is now "Sevagram," the present all-India center for the training of teachers, principals and superintendents in Basic Education—and still only a humble collection of mud huts—came from a personal message from Gandhi to Shri A. W. Aryanayakam, asking the latter to journey to Wardha. Aryanayakam, graduate of Princeton and an Indian Christian, had been residing at the headquarters of Rabindrinath Tagore, India's most renowned and best loved contributor to artistic culture. Aryanayakam and his wife, also a teacher, undertook with Gandhi the erection of a few simple buildings to serve as the modest beginning of an attempt to teach the ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed and uneducated children of the vicinity something of a social responsibility—an educational service which, if adequately performed, might eventually bring all India to enlightenment and happiness. From the outset, Sevagram depended on the collaborative work of teachers and pupils in preparing necessary food, clothing and shelter without recourse to outside capital. In the first place, Gandhi and Aryanayakam knew that they could never secure a

subsidy from the British Government for the type of educational work which they planned, and, second, Gandhi believed that any school dependent upon public or private subsidy could easily lose its academic freedom.

FRONTIERS

The Historicity of Jesus

FRONTIERS for June 1 discussed the relationship of antisemitism to the Christian belief that the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus, and proposed that Christians withdraw from their articles of faith the idea that their "God" suffered crucifixion at the hands of a historical race or people such as the Jews. A reader who obviously enjoys a background of theological studies finds this proposal without merit. He writes:

> Either Jesus lived or he did not. Either he died on the cross or he died some other way. As scholars know, there was a tussle, settled years ago, as to whether Jesus actually lived and whether the salient reports on his life on earth were true or not, but that struggle is settled so far as the scholars go. Jesus was a historical figure. He was executed by the Roman government. His impact on people was so pronounced that the church came into existence and still persists, best understood as a community of believers.

> You rightly distinguish between Jesus and Osiris-Dionysos-Prometheus on historical grounds. . . . The terrific struggle between the early Christian movement and the Greek mystery religions and Greek philosophies was real, and the Greek might have won, except for one clinching reality: Jesus was a historical figure, while the mystery figures were sheer myth and the Greek concepts were philosophy rather than rooted in history. Without the lever of historical fact, the Christian movement would have no more foundation than the mystery religions.

> . . . I am puzzled by your saying that, centrally, the genius of the New Testament (the Sermon on the Mount) necessitates the removal of the crucifixion. Are you saying that the crucifixion "by the Jews" is not a historical fact? If you intended the latter, it was far from clear. . . . If you mean the former, what intellectual company are you keeping?

Before any "authorities" are cited on these questions, a general statement of the convictions of this Department seems in order. First, then, we have no doubt that a living man was behind the vast complex of allegory and legend which has grown up around the name of Jesus. Whether he was called Jehoshua Ben Pandira, as the Talmudist historians claim, and whether he lived at some other time than the epoch assigned to him by Christian orthodoxy seem matters without too much importance. That this man was great and good appears to be indisputable, but the manner of his physical death has neither philosophical importance nor historical certainly. Surely, it was his life that made him a Messiah, and not his death.

Second, we find ourselves indifferent to the claim that Jesus—the "historical Jesus"—was the "Son of God." How the Infinitude of Spirit could have a "son" is beyond comprehension—ours, at any rate. If Jesus was symbolically the son of God, according to the philosophical doctrine of emanations taught by the Gnostics, then this we can understand, but only if all other men are equally, if not so eminently, sons of God, too.

Finally, compared to the Christian conception of the *uniqueness* of Jesus as the son of God, the Greek mystery religions seem to have much the better—the more philosophical, that is—account of the human situation. And slanders by early Christians, as well as persecutions—the murder of Hypatia, for example—were more responsible for the defeat of the mystery religions than the triumph of "history" over "myth." As Willoughby points out in his *Pagan Regeneration,* "Christian apologists delighted to represent their pagan competitors in as unfavorable a light as possible." It may be noted, also, that the most philosophical of the "Fathers" belonged to the Alexandrian School—men such as Origen and Clement. These early Christian teachers were platonists in almost everything but name, and even Augustine's subtlety had a similar source. Candidly, then, we incline to the view that had Greek philosophy and the Mystery Schools won the struggle against the dogmas and temporal power of early Christianity, the Western world might have avoided much of the bigoted intolerance of the "Dark Ages" and suffered fewer barbarities in later centuries.

The assurance of our correspondent regarding the historicity of Jesus seems exaggerated. If this controversy was "settled years ago," one may wonder why it continues to enjoy animated discussion. Simply by turning the pages of some old copies of the *Hibbert Journal,* it is possible to find extremely learned debate on precisely the points raised in this letter. Paul-Louis Couchoud, for example, wrote in the issue of January, 1939:

> There are many clear ideas accepted as self-evident which have to be renounced when closely examined. The historicity of Jesus is one of them. It is a false key for the unlocking of Christian texts. It renders them incomprehensible. . . . What the Gospels have converted into legend is not a fond memory nor a tragic episode. It is a religious concept, the newest and the highest. The problem of Christian origins will become clear and simple when a religious theme is no longer confounded with an historical fact.

> The historicity of Jesus is an article of faith. *Passus sub Pontio Pilato* is integral to a *Credo* which must be accepted or rejected in its entirety. . . His [Jesus'] true place is among the resurrection Gods, his predecessors and inferior brethren, Demeter, Dionysus, Osiris, Attis, Mithra whose mysteries before his, but with lesser power, had offered to men the great hope of winning the victory over death.

Then, in the *Hibbert Journal* for October, 1938, Ray Knight has this to say regarding the Christian Saviour's "impact on people," to borrow our correspondent's phrase:

> Clearly, the foundation-stone of orthodox belief was shifting quicksand in the '50's. The sayings and doings of the Ministry, it is perforce admitted, "did not interest" St. Paul and his disciples [fn.—B. W. Bacon, *Making of the New 'Testament,* 154. Paul looked inwards, Peter backwards, p. 51; if Jesus was historical, why did not Paul look backwards as well as inwards?]; how could they have failed to interest them? Creedal incidents apart, Barnabas, Ignatius, Hermas, and the others knew nothing whatever about the "great historical truths" of Christianity. Paul's own testimony or the lack of it is decisive. The Christ of his inspiration is not the Galilean prophet but a spirit akin to the Socratic daimon. So far from acknowledging a human predecessor in his mission, he insists not once but many times that he and no other is author of the revelation, to him alone has been committed the revealing of it. Nowhere does he say or suggest, "this that I preach was preached by Christ himself only a little time ago, and there are many yet alive who heard him"; on the contrary, he disclaims all interest in a Christ of flesh and blood. . . .

> "The one immeasurably great man who was strong enough to think himself the spiritual ruler of mankind and bend all history to his purposes" is a figment of the letter-worshipper's imagination, unwarranted by a shred of contemporary evidence. Son of God or unexampled genius, the Galilean prophet is ignored by his disciples in all save name and mythic history. Not that which Jesus did and said but that which the Christ experiences, Virgin Birth, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension, is the whole original belief.

This does not sound as though there were a great deal more than Greek and gnostic metaphysics in the story of the Christ, so far as "contemporary evidence" is concerned. In any event, it is gross materialism, we think, to confuse the death of a man, whether at the hands of the Romans or the instigation of the Jews, with the sublime symbolism of the crucifixion. And that the Jews have suffered from this identification greater horrors than words can describe is certainly beyond dispute.